2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

any regular system of time intervals. The *umwaka* (plur. *imyaka*) is the name given to the complete cycle of climatic changes and economic processes which make up the year.[1] This is divided into thirteen months (*umueshi—imieshi*) which signifies moon, or the cycle of the moon (cf. table on p. 389). The names of these months are used with greater or less frequency according to the importance of the activities performed in them. The coming of each new moon is an important event in the people's life, since it affects very largely the tempo of ordinary activities. When the moon is full, laughter and talk go on late into the night and the drums sound for dancing. When the moon has waned, there is no other system of lighting and the people go early to bed. The days of full moon are also believed to be specially lucky and to be auspicious for the starting of any new activity. I noticed several times that the *bakabilo* of Citimukulu's court postponed important ritual acts, often at some practical inconvenience, until the nights were 'white, completely white' (*ukubuta tutu*), explaining in answer to my comment: 'We cannot work at such things in the dark' (*Teti tubombefyo mu mfifi*). The rhythm of the changing moons has thus a significance to the Bemba that it has lost in our society, and the appearance of the new crescent is greeted with delight and often with shouts from the children, but at the same time the calendar of months is rarely used as a method of calculating time or fixing the start of economic activities. Some months coincide with the change of season: *Shinde* (April), the change to the cold weather; *Lusuba lunono* (October), the beginning of the hot season; *Mpundu* (November), the coming of the rains and the time of the ripening of the *mpundu* fruit. In these cases the name of the month is used in daily conversation in planning activities. But in other cases the change of climate, i.e. windy season (*mpepo*) or the hot season (*ulusuba*) is referred to only, and there are several months in the year when, owing to the difficulties of working with a thirteen-months calendar, the ordinary native is not quite certain what the name of the particular moon should be.[2] The English child hardly notices changes in the moon, but learns to recite the months of the year

[1] The *umwaka* is a cycle of seasonal changes but it is never calculated by means of the stars, in which the Bemba seem to have little interest and never use as a means of reckoning time.

[2] In April 1934 I heard the chief's council discuss informally with the Paramount chief whether the moon that had just appeared was correctly *Kutumpu* or *Shinde*, and these learned men of the tribe took different sides on the question.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

The Ceremony

It was described as a place of safety, and again as a place to idle about in, (*ukuangala*), or to rest in. One woman said it was to teach the girl that she must no longer sit about in the village square. Her place, as a married woman, was inside the hut. Another referred vaguely to the crest on top of the roof and said it was like the feathered head-dress worn by a *nacimbusa* in the old days. It was a curious example of work done with a great expenditure of effort and apparently little interest in the meaning of the emblem produced.)

In the meantime, other women were at work making a screen about four feet high. It was covered with decorated clay. A small window was made in the wall and in the centre a round lump with a feather stuck in the middle of it.

(Here again, the symbolism was complex. The screen was called the *lubondo*. It was described as the wall of the house the man would build for his bride. The boss in the centre was called the navel and was referred to in a rather sly manner. The navel is always thought of as a rather amusing and slightly obscene part of the body by the Bemba and one woman said in a shamefaced yet slightly defiant manner, 'Yes, it is to teach her to yield herself to her husband—to let him sleep with her when he wants to.')

Whether or not the esoteric significance of these *mbusa* was realized by the company present, the atmosphere in the hut was that of a rather jolly children's Christmas party in England. The girls and their parents and close relatives crowded into the house in the evening and played uproarious games in and around the shelter and the screen. There was dodging behind the screen with a good deal of giggling and shouting, a ring dance round the shelter, and a ball game played with a rolled-up piece of cloth. The company enjoyed themselves and were most impatient of requests to 'explain' what they were doing. 'We are just honouring the past,' said one girl nonchalantly, smiling and poised to catch 'the ball' a fellow was aiming at her.

The games went on till about nine at night. After this, Nango-shye, the *banacisungu* and one or two helpers walked round and round the village beating the chisungu rhythm on the drums until late into the night. She said the drums would let people know how important a ceremony it was.